

Canadian

Double
FILM

WEEKLY



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OUR BUSINESS by N.A. Taylor

Cause for Panic?

It has often been said that our business progresses from one crisis to another. From articles presently appearing in newspapers and magazines, one might assume that we are beyond the crisis and heading toward a depression. There is considerable talk about studios in Hollywood closing down, and cancelling some of their commitments for multi-million dollar productions. The exercise in reduced production expenditures extends beyond and into the area of operating costs, including that of advertising. There is also much talk about disposing of studios in all or in part. Many of these are situated on very expensive land and have not been economically viable for some time.

There have been a number of new theatres built in the United States and in Canada in recent years — particularly in shopping centres. Some are doing fine, and as is to be expected, others not so well. Over the years we have been taught to believe that success or failure is based on a sufficiency of ticket-selling "product". Notwithstanding the fact that last year most of the very top grossers were "family films", theatre bookers today are generally looking to what is loosely termed "sex" films for the best grosses. Producers of this type of film seem to keep attempting to top each other in daring — which prompts one to ask: "How long can this continue?"

There is an old adage that bad money drives out good. To paraphrase, bad films may drive out good films. So many of the sex films are really bad that it has reached the point where many people think that the only thing they can see in a movie theatre today is sex or violence, or both. Could this be the reason that so many fine films, and there are a number, do not reach their maximum potential?

If we are going through a period of recession, or a period of panic, it may be a very good thing. Our

business is like a ship which periodically must have its barnacles removed. We are long over-due in the area of control of escalating cost of film production. Too often in recent years, vast sums of money have been expended in a cavalier and prodigal way. There has been little excuse in the past for the expenditure of 15 or 20 million dollars on one production. That era has definitely passed, as has the practice of paying stars up to a million dollars for one film, sometimes with a percentage bonus. It is true that films cannot necessarily be produced on fixed budgets, but waste of any kind should not be tolerated or condoned.

At the moment, it appears that after this summer there will be a shortage of feature films, but this is not necessarily a reason for exhibitors to panic. A vacuum is abhorrent to nature, and when it is created something rushes in to fill the void. Thus, as has happened in the past, provided that playing time is available, other films will be made and offered to exhibitors. The producers of these will insist on getting a dollar's worth of value on the screen for what they expend. All of them may not do smash business at the box office but, hopefully, they will be rentable at terms which will allow the exhibitor to retain a fair profit.

Nobody can say that a business which grossed a billion dollars at the box office last year in the United States, alone, is a dying business. Hopefully, a shake-up period will be good for our business. Such action, followed by a fair distribution of the box office dollar between producer, distributor and exhibitor will, in the long run, be good for everybody in our business.

Things may get worse before they get better. Notwithstanding all the problems which we see ahead, we believe, that as a prime time leisure industry, ours will survive and prosper.

New U.S. movie ratings go into effect March 1

After about 15 months in operation, the Valenti system — the U.S. motion picture industry's voluntary ratings — will be revised.

Effective March 1, the M or Mature ratings is being dropped. Pictures which once would have been rated M will now be rated GP, which translates roughly as "suitable for general attendance, though with some parental discretion advised."

The change has been made, says Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, because a recent survey showed that the Mature rating was the least understood by the public.

What seems clear is that the Mature label carried more ominous connotations than the raters intended, or theatre-owners liked.

The G or General classification says the same. On the face of it the new classifications — G and GP — do not spell instant clarification, but GP isn't quite so ominous as Mature.

The other major change taking effect March 1 is that the age limit for the R (Restricted) rating is raised from 16 to 17. The age limit for the X category had previously been raised from 16 to 18.

Now those under 17, rather than under 16, must be accompanied by a parent or adult guardian to R-rated films. Those under 18 may not be admitted to X films under any circumstances.

The upgrading of the age limit from 16 to 17 will not please teenagers who complain that the original system was unduly repressive, but it may mollify many adults who have complained that the system was too permissive.

While no change was hinted in the announcement, there is a feeling in the industry that the code administrators may quietly broaden the tolerances of the Restricted category and leave the X rating strictly as a dumping ground for the extreme exploitation product — the films of which the MPAA would in effect take no official notice at all.

The fact that serious works of cinema like *Midnight Cowboy* and *Medium Cool* have been lumped together with sleazy and disreputable merchandise in the X category (and incidentally been barred from being advertised in several newspaper and radio-television markets) has been an embarrassment to the industry.

The stiffening of the age limits on the Restricted and X ratings could foreshadow such an operational redefinition.

The Valenti statement called the rating system, which took effect Nov. 1, 1968, "a gratifying success." A nationwide survey conducted for the MPAA and sampling 2,600 persons, found 58 per cent who said they found the ratings useful.

A survey conducted by the National Association of Theatre Owners showed that nine out of 10 theatres queried used the ratings in their advertising.

Re-elect Vic Knight ACTRA national prexy

Victor Knight was recently re-elected national president of the Association of Canadian Television and Radio Artists. An actor, Knight resides in Montreal and has been on the ACTRA board since 1964.

Reg Gibson, Winnipeg singer and actor, and Don Parrish, Toronto singer and announcer, were elected first and second vice-president, respectively. Leslie Yeo, Toronto actor, was elected national treasurer, and the three remaining executive posts went to Halifax actor William Fulton, Toronto writer Jack Gray and Calgary actor Jack Goth.

Other members of the board of directors for 1970-71 are Barney O'Sullivan, Vancouver; Patrick Hughes, Edmonton; Hilda Allen, Regina; Pierre Berton, Vernon; Chapman and Lorraine Thompson, Toronto; Jim Terrell, Ottawa; Dean Kaye, Montreal; Sandy McAllister, St. John's, Nfld.

men in the news

Joe Hyams has been named a vice-president of **Warner Bros., Inc.** Hyams will make his headquarters in New York, reporting to **Daniel Stern**, newly-appointed vice-president of advertising and publicity, worldwide.

Hyams joined Warner Bros. in 1960 as national publicity director, after holding publicity posts with Columbia Pictures, 20th Century-Fox, Hecht-Hill-Lancaster, John Wayne's Batjac Productions and Joseph L. Mankiewicz's Figaro Productions.

Daniel Stern has been named vice-president of advertising and publicity, worldwide, for Warner Bros., Inc. Stern fills the vacancy left by Richard Lederer, who is now a production vice-president at the studio in Burbank, Calif.

Peter George has been appointed manager of Famous Players' Capitol Theatre in St. John's, Nfld., it was announced by W. N. Murray, general manager in Toronto. George replaces **Robert Stiles** who has left the company.

Arthur R. Barron has been appointed vice president, finance, of **Paramount Pictures**. Barron will fill the post held by **Dan J. Lala**, who has resigned to take a new assignment elsewhere. Barron's prior position was that of vice president of finance and administration for Paramount Television.

Canadians can qualify for AFI school course

The American Film Institute in Washington will inaugurate a two-year course in film making, starting next September. The course will accommodate 15 applicants, and consideration will be given to two Canadians.

In order to qualify for the course, applicants will be asked to submit a film they have made. The films submitted will be shown to a panel of judges who will deem if an applicant qualifies for the two-year course. There is no age limit for applicants, and they can be either male or female.

Further details for any one in Canada interested in this course can be had by writing to Julian Roffman, Meridian Films, 175 Bloor St. East, Toronto 5.



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Looking Ahead

DYAN CANNON has been signed to star opposite **Stacy Executioner**.

Keach in MGM's **The Travelling**

Miss Cannon, who won the New York Film Critics award as Best Supporting Actress for her role in **Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice**, will portray a murderess awaiting the electric chair who uses her wits and wiles to avoid execution.

The Travelling Executioner, to be produced and directed by **Jack Smight**, begins filming next month on location at Kilby Prison in Alabama. ★ ★ ★ **Milly Vitale** has been signed for a featured role in the **Columbia Pictures** comedy **Contestazione Generale**, now filming in Rome with **Vittorio Gassman**, **Nino Manfredi** and **Alberto Sordi**.

Miss Vitale, who played her first screen role at the age of 11, returns to films after a seven-year absence.

★ ★ ★ **Donald Pleasence** and **Robert Duvall** have been signed by executive producer Francis Ford Coppola to star in **THX 1138**, an American Zoetrope production for **Warner Bros.**, which is being filmed in and around San Francisco.

THX 1138, written by George Lucas and Walter Murch, is being

directed by Lucas, based on a short subject entitled **THX 1138 4EB**, which he made as a University of Southern California student and which won the National Student Film Festival's grand prize in 1967. ★ ★ ★ **Columbia Pictures** has concluded a deal with Gianni Hecht Lucari of Documento Films for **A Girl in Australia**, starring **Alberto Sordi** and **Monica Vitti**, which will be filmed in Italy and Australia next spring.

Adapted from an original story by Rodolfo Sonego, the film deals with a mail order bride who emigrates to Australia to become the wife of an Italian who has settled there. Producer Lucari is currently negotiating for a director to make the film.

Sordi and **Miss Vitti** recently co-starred for **Columbia** in **Help Me, Darling**, directed by **Sordi**, which has become one of the year's top boxoffice hits in Italy. **Sordi** is also now filming **Contestazione Generale** for **Columbia**, co-starring in the comedy satire with **Vittorio Gassman** and **Nino Manfredi**. ★ ★ ★ **Petro Armendariz, Jr.**, son of the late Mexican actor and a star in Mexico in his own right, has been signed for a role in **Chisum**, a **Batjac Production** for

Warner Bros. being filmed on location at Durango, Mexico, with **John Wayne** starring.

Armendariz will play one of **Wayne's** men in the story of the 1870's cattle wars, which **Andrew V. McLaglen** is directing. ★ ★ ★ **David Ladd** has been signed by producer-director **Stanley Kramer** for a top featured role in **R.P.M.***, the **Columbia Picture** presentation starring **Anthony Quinn**, **Ann Margaret** and **Gary Lockwood**.

Ladd's last previous role was in **Misty**. At that time he gave up his acting career to enroll at the University of Southern California, graduating last June. His first film role since his temporary retirement is that of a student activist apprehended by the police following a campus revolt.

Peter O'Toole will star in four films for a newly formed overseas production company, to be owned jointly by O'Toole (with his partner **Jules Buck**) and **Sagittarius Productions, Inc.**

Shooting is scheduled to begin in England this summer for the new company's first production starring O'Toole. This will be **The Ruling Class**, **Peter Barnes'** successful play, which was produced on the London stage this past season. **Barnes** has been commissioned to write the script for the film, which will be directed by **Peter Medak**.

Veteran CBC artist, Byng Whitteker dies

Byng Whitteker, a veteran of Canadian broadcasting for more than 30 years, died of an apparent heart attack in Toronto this week. He was 56.

Whitteker joined the **CBC** in 1937 and appeared on such popular talk and record shows as **Audio**, **Byng's Choice**, **Court of Opinion** and **Small Types Club**.

He also covered many royal tours, often filling long, silent gaps with interesting chatter.

In 1956, he was named chief commentator, special events, for the **CBC** and later helped develop programming for broadcasters covering 1967's Centennial celebrations.

Whitteker, born in Dundela, Ont. in the Ottawa Valley in 1914, was christened **Genzmer Earl**. He discarded the names for the familiar **Byng** when he was a student at **Waterloo College**.

He began his radio career with **CKCR** in neighbouring **Kitchener** in 1935. Two years later he moved to the **CBC** where he remained except for the years from 1943-1945 when he was on loan to the **BBC** in **London**.

He is survived by his wife, **June Dennis**, a free-lance broadcaster, two sons and two daughters.



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IT'S MY BAG

By Ed Hocura

A MEMORABLE NIGHT: It would be easy to dismiss what took place this week in Toronto as just another social night, if you didn't happen to be one of the 500 who gathered at the farewell tribute to **Frank Streaan** as **Chief Barker of Variety Club of Ontario Tent 28**. But to be there was to see and hear the tributes paid to a man with unselfish feelings for handicapped people, and realize that there is more to life than trying to stay alive in today's rat race. During his two-year tenure as **Chief Barker**, **Frank Streaan** gave more of his spare time to fulfill his duties than most men could possibly afford. And without even his closest friends being aware of it, Streaan found the time to visit hospitals



FRANK STREAAN

to brighten the lonely hours of the sick who regarded this man as a ray of sunshine in their saddened lives. But this was something Streaan enjoyed doing; it was not something to attract attention to himself. No literary character immortalized by the late **Damon Runyon** comes close to matching Streaan's zeal for life. And this was brought out in the stories told about him by close friends from all walks of life. An enterprising recording company missed a great opportunity in not putting on tape the remarks of **Jim Coleman**, **Sam Koffman**, **Mayor Vic Copps of Hamilton**, **Joey Poster**, **Harvey Dobbs**, **Jake Dunlap**, **Henry Warner** and **Sam Shopowitz**, the incoming **Chief Barker of Tent 28**. It would have made for a unique LP that would outsell any record ever made. The recent television show in which **Jack Benny** was

"roasted" by the Friars Club in New York paled in comparison to the **Salute To Frank Streaan**. It was announced that the turnout was one of the largest of its kind in the history of Tent 28, and those in attendance will attest that it was something they will remember for a long time. And when they all stood to give Streaan a standing ovation, it was obvious that a rare human being was in their midst. In 25 years of covering numerous tributes to men who had dedicated their lives to helping the less unfortunate, I don't think any of them were as sincere as this one. Tent 28 will long remember **Frank Streaan's** unstinting devotion to his job as **Chief Barker**. And his accomplishments the past two years are reflected in the **Variety Club of Ontario's** growth in membership and national recognition. Up until the other night, **Frank Streaan** was just a man I had heard spoken of as being "quite a character." But now he goes into my diary of unforgettable moments as a man for all seasons; a man who was never too busy to lend a helping hand to people unable to enjoy life as much as he does. May he be with us for a long time to come. The world would be an empty place without him.

★ ★ ★

A REFRESHING CHANGE: **Kurt Russell** is not the kind of movie actor to cause exhibitors to jump for joy at the thought of playing one of his movies. But his track record shows that for an 18-year-old mini-star he's pretty much in demand these days, both for movies and television series. Soon to be seen in **Walt Disney Production's The Computer Wore Tennis Shoes**, Russell came to Toronto this week on a five-city publicity junket. It was a refreshing change for me to meet a Hollywood personality who didn't regale me with such time-worn clichés as "I'm ready for bigger things, but the studios are holding me back" . . . "I want to make movies that will identify me with the problems young people face in the U.S. today" . . . "I think my studio made a big mistake the way they handled my last picture." I'm happy to report that **Kurt Russell** is a quiet, unassuming young man without any hangups who has regarded his eight years as an actor as more fun than work. The day before I had lunch with Russell he was the dinner date for 25

Toronto teenagers who won a contest co-sponsored by a radio station and the **Toronto Telegram**. The paper gave the event a six-column story which must have brought joy to **Gerry Collins**, who handles publicity for **Empire Films** and is not used to this kind of treatment from the hard-hearted Toronto press. Especially when it's free. Where other actors might have blanched at the thought of being at the mercy of 25 teenagers for a couple of hours, Russell rose to the occasion like a pro. He didn't pretend for one minute that he didn't enjoy what must have been a gigglethon for the **Win A Date With Kurt Russell** contest winners. Russell's love for acting is second only to his love for baseball, something he inherited from his actor-father **Bing Russell** who at one time was a promising pro until he was beamed by a pitched ball. A high school graduate, Kurt Russell would like to further his education by going to college. But this would mean risking the opportunity to continue to work as an actor as long as he is in demand. "I'm going to try to do it on a correspondence course basis, starting next fall. I don't know if I can do it, and if it doesn't work out I'll have to decide which is more important: a college degree or an acting career." Unlike **Diana Rigg**, **Peter Ustinov** and **Alfred Hitchcock**, who preceded him on publicity junkets, **Kurt Russell** didn't have the news media lining up to record his thoughts on the trials and tribulations of being a Hollywood star. Which is all the more a pity. I think even the most hardened of interviewers would have been able to glean something pertinent from a screen veteran of 18 whose sincerity and honesty were remarkable to say the least. It would have at least proved to them that it is possible to meet a young Hollywood star and not count the time wasted in talking to him. To those who passed up the chance to meet **Kurt Russell**, tough luck.

★ ★ ★

ODDS & ENDS: In an attempt to find out if moviegoers are really interested in reduced admission prices, a **Hamilton** theatre experimented with cut-rate weekend matinees. Few people bothered to turn out . . . A subscriber named **Laurie Boucher** is interested in building a drive-in theatre and would like to hear from someone regarding costs, necessary equipment and pitfalls. He can be contacted at R.R. #3, Bouctouche, N.B. Can anyone reading this help him out? . . . Old Man Flu really hit people in **Windsor** theatre circles recently. A total of 18 were laid low in just one week, including **Mike Micelli** of the **Palace** and **Howard Lewis** of the **Park** . . . And speaking of **Windsor**, a new trend has developed in recent weeks. Where at one time **Windsor** citizens journeyed across the border to **Detroit** to see a movie, the situation has reversed. Since **Detroit** theatres no longer play movies ahead of **Windsor**, more U.S. money is turning up at **Windsor** box offices. Especially on Sundays . . . Former **CBC** producer **Eric Till** will be flying to **Toronto** from **London** next week to attend special screenings of his **A Great Big Thing**, a film he made in **Montreal** in 1968. Till directed the widely-acclaimed **MGM** comedy **Hot Millions**, and recently finished another film for **MGM**, **The Walking Stick**, with **David Hemmings** and **Samantha Eggar** . . . With all the talk going around about television showing little interest in buying "Restricted" movies, **ABC-TV** has had little sponsor resistance to its **Love — American Style** weekly series. If ever a television show has come close to being strictly adult fare, this show is it. I can think of a dozen so-called "frank" movies that pale in comparison to what comes into my living room on Sunday nights . . . The funniest show on **CBC Radio** comes on Thursday nights when a group of artsy-craftsy critics take it upon themselves to review movies. They have to be putting listeners on with their pompous critiques . . . Judging by the reviews from **New York** critics, **20th Century-Fox** must have something worth seeing with **M-A-S-H**. One critic hails it as "The best American war comedy since sound came in." . . . To the growing list of foreign subscribers to **Canadian Film Weekly**, add the name of University of Baghdad in Iraq.

M.P.T.A.O. meeting Mon., Feb. 9 in Toronto

The Motion Picture Theatres Association of Ontario will hold its annual meeting at the Park Plaza Hotel in Toronto on Mon. Feb. 9. Election of officers for the coming year will climax an informative business session, with the following guest speakers:

- W. Z. Estey, QC, will deliver a report on copyright fees.
- Peter Mandell, vice-president, Famous Players Canadian

Corp., will deliver a report on business taxes on theatre properties.

- Alex Stewart, of the Motion Picture Institute of Canada, will deliver a report on forthcoming projects planned by his organization.

Cocktails and luncheon will follow the meeting, hosted by **Lloyd Pearson**, **General Sound** and **Theatre Equipment Ltd.**, **Bill Pfaff**, **Mavety Film Delivery Ltd.**, and **Max Candel**, **Consolidated Theatre Services Ltd.**

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What Do You Want To Know?

An up-to-the minute list of Canadian theatres, with names, locations, seating capacities and licencees • Boxoffice statistics from 1930 on — theatres, receipts, total admissions • *Personnel of theatre circuits, distribution companies, studios, labs, equipment and service organizations* • The amusement taxes and licence fees for each province • *Location, personnel and fees of each censorship board* • Production facilities • *Provincial legislation and inspection personnel* • Film carriers • Television film sales companies • Winners of USA, Canadian and British awards • *Unions of projectionists, actors, musicians, stagehands, cameramen, etc.* • *Television stations and other information* • Canadian members of USA engineering and advertising organizations • *Personnel of Canadian TV networks* • Record companies • The National Film Board • *And other information of many kinds.*

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